



## AREERA State Plans of Work

This Plan of Work (POW) Newsletter provides reminders on upcoming due dates and changes in the software, an update on NIFA National Program Leaders assignments, and a description of the upcoming POW presentation to be given at the National Extension and Research Administrative Officers' Conference (NERAOC).

### We're officially in the POW Busy Season!

All 2013-2017 Plans of Work and 2011 Annual Reports (POWs/ARs) are due from the states by April 2, 2012. For any state requesting an extension, you must email [pow@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:pow@nifa.usda.gov) with an official written request notifying NIFA of your rationale and the amount of extra time you feel is appropriate.

NIFA remains committed to the policy of allowing National Program Leaders (NPL) 60 days to complete their reviews of submitted POWs/ARs. Thus, the due date for reviews of all submitted POWs and ARs this year is June 1, 2012, or 60 days after submission, whichever is later. Additionally, the POW Staff is committed to completing final processing of reviews within 30 days of NPL acceptance, so states should expect final results within 90 days from their original submission date.

With these due dates coming up, we can safely say we're in the "POW busy season." Please do not hesitate to contact Katelyn Sellers (202-401-5482) with any questions about reporting information and procedures or issues you may be experiencing with the POW software.

### Changes in the Software this Year

The previous newsletter announced the changes made in the Standard Outputs, State Defined

Outputs, and Evaluation Sections of the POW. These changes were a result of recommendations made by the 2010 Panel of Experts. The primary goal of the changes in the outputs sections was to take the burden off the states for estimating *target* output numbers. The more important data is gleaned from the *actual* output numbers, which is still required in the Annual Report. The primary goal of the changes in the Evaluation Section, which is now mandatory, was to provide more substantial information to both the states and NIFA that better answered the question: "How do we know if this program has been successful?" NIFA believes the mandatory, yet flexible, "open text box" structure of the evaluation section allows for states to submit as much or as little information as is appropriate for a particular program, rather than using the rigid and limited check box listing that was in the POW in prior years. A [Guidance Document](#) on our website provides more details regarding these changes.

### New National Program Leader Assignments

NIFA Senior Leadership has recently undertaken an initiative to restructure the assignments of National Program Leaders (NPLs) as reviewers of Plans of Work and their associated Annual Reports. The new structure provides a more balanced approach in that it connects one NPL per Plan of Work and its associated Annual Report, rather than connecting two NPLs per state (in a few cases, more experienced NPLs have been assigned two Plans of Work). NIFA believes these new assignments will result in NPLs being able to give more attention and effort to serving as the reviewer for their assigned Plan of Work. All Research and

Extension Directors and POW Contacts in each state will soon be notified individually with their reviewer's name and contact information.

### **Upcoming NERAOC Presentation on POW with Focus on the National Outcomes & Indicators**

Katelyn Sellers will be giving a POW Update presentation at the upcoming National Extension and Research Administrative Officers' Conference (NERAOC), co-hosted this year by West Virginia University and West Virginia State University on May 20–23, 2012, at Waterfront Place Hotel, 2 Waterfront Place, Morgantown, West Virginia. The POW presentation will give a general overview of improvement efforts, lessons learned from this year's reporting cycle, and upcoming changes states can expect to see in the POW software over the course of the next few reporting years. Specifically, Ms. Sellers will address the integration of the National Outcomes & Indicators into the Annual Report first and the Plan of Work second. As NIFA has previously emphasized, states will report on the [National Outcomes & Indicators](#) voluntarily only once they are loaded into the software. Currently, NIFA aims to have the software ready to accept this data for the FY2013 reporting cycle, which is when states will submit their 2012 Annual Reports. NIFA wishes to stress that states or institutions *will not be penalized* if they do not have their data ready for that particular reporting cycle.

After the conference, the presentation slides will be placed on the AREERA webpage for public viewing. In addition, future Reporting Web Conferences will use an adapted version of the presentation to further emphasize and explain the changes states can expect to see in the reporting software as we move forward with integrating and reporting on the National Outcomes & Indicators in the POW.

### **Reminder: Signing up for the RWC Series**

The Reporting Web Conference Series is a bi-monthly series identified by NIFA leadership and state partners as an effective tool for fostering

better communication about reporting policies and procedures between NIFA and the Land Grant University system. You must be a member of our RWC listserv to receive notification of upcoming conferences and their topics. The directions for joining the listserv are on the [Reporting Web Conference web page](#). Here, you will also find information on the next web conference, recordings of past web conferences along with slides used, and the written answers to questions asked.

### **\*\*\* What's Next? \*\*\***

*The "What's Next" section of the newsletter is designed to give a brief, "sneak peek" at upcoming initiatives for the POW reporting process and things to look out for in upcoming newsletters and web conferences.*

- NIFA NPLs and state partners recognize the benefit of establishing standard outcomes and indicators for measuring programmatic success. Currently, groups of stakeholders in 4H, Youth, and Family & Consumer Science, as well as Food Nutrition & Health areas are having discussions to determine how they might move forward in establishing their own "national outcomes and indicators" that could potentially be included in Plan of Work reporting. Future newsletters will keep all apprised of their development.
- The NIFA Planning Accountability and Reporting office is currently developing a formal process for collecting voluntary feedback from the states regarding their POW reviews. This effort supports NIFA's desire to provide excellent customer service and expert guidance on agricultural research and extension activities, and we believe collecting such data over time will give us a better idea of "how we're doing" and how we might better serve our partners in providing feedback through the POW review process.

**Contact & Resource Information**

*Past newsletters can be found at:*

[http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/reporting/pl  
anrept/pow\\_newsletters.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/reporting/pl<br/>anrept/pow_newsletters.html).

*Visit our website homepage at:*

[http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/reporting/pla  
nrept/plansofwork.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/reporting/pla<br/>nrept/plansofwork.html)

**For more information on the Plan of Work,  
e-mail the POW Staff at [pow@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:pow@nifa.usda.gov),  
or call Katelyn Sellers, 202-401-5482.**